

SPECIAL MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
September 6, 2012

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Audrey P Beck Building.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Freudmann, Keane, Kochenburger, Moran, Paulhus, Paterson, Ryan, Shapiro, Schaefer

II. OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Brian Anderson, Ridge Road, objected to the possibility of conducting the school building referendum on a date other than November 6, 2012, the date of the General Election. Mr. Anderson objected to disfranchising the students, who are voters in Mansfield.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, spoke against the two school plan and against holding the referendum on Election Day.

Greg Shangold, Beacon Hill Drive, objected to holding the referendum on Election Day as the students do not pay taxes and the students who feel the vote is important would be able to vote on whatever day the referendum is held.

Greg Zlotnick, Wormwood Hill Road, agreed with the previous two speakers regarding the date of the referendum and is concerned that the general economic conditions of the next five to ten years will be challenging. Teachers make the schools.

Arthur Wright, Hillyndale Road, believes the objection to students voting because they do not pay taxes is irrelevant because tax payments are included in their rent. Mr. Wright has thought about the issue and reviewed the considered options. He is in favor of the Town Council's recommendation.

JoAnn Nolan, Beech Mountain Road, expressed concern stating that such an important decision should not be held on Election Day.

Don Nolan, Beech Mountain Road, is not in in favor of holding the referendum on Election Day as the students do not have an interest in the project.

Jim Raynor, Moulton Road, spoke in support of holding the referendum on a day other than November 6, 2012. Anyone who is eligible to vote will be able to do so on the day chosen.

Arthur Smith, Mulberry Road, thanked the Council and staff for the time given to the informational sessions and questioned why the decision was made not to include a student location among the sessions. Mr. Smith also raised questions regarding the cost of water, the cost of project overruns, the square footage of the original buildings and other issues.

Mayor Paterson, in response to Mr. Smith's comments, stated no meeting was held to decide on the locations of the informational sessions. The Town Manager

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and the Mayor had an informal conversation regarding the locations but the issue of not having sessions on campus, never came up.

Robin Weiner, Birchwood Heights Road, thanked the Town Council and speakers for their comments and spoke in support of fixing up the schools. Ms. Weiner is concerned about the tax implications of the project.

Michael Zito, Westgate Lane, attended several of the sessions and expressed his belief that the date of the vote is important. Having the referendum on a day other than Election Day would support the best interest of the townspeople but would still allow all eligible voters to vote.

Genevieve McGann, Cedar Swamp Road, thanked the Town Council and Board of Education for their work and stated the referendum will have a huge impact on the average taxpayer.

Susan Zito, Westgate Lane, noted that many she has spoken to about this project are concerned about the financial impact, as they are on fixed incomes. Many of these residents have lived in Town for a long time and would like to remain in Mansfield. Ms. Zito does not support the project.

Jim Greene, Beacon Hill Road, asked the Council to change the date so when residents do come out to vote they will have made a conscious decision to vote.

III. OLD BUSINESS

1. School Building Project

Council members reviewed the discussions and concerns they heard at the school building referendum information sessions. These concerns include the cost of the project; the effect on the taxpayers and subsequent budgets; the uncertainties regarding the economy; current and proposed building projects; the fact the proposed two school option is the most cost-effective in the long run; and the expected revenues from the Storrs Center development.

Mr. Shapiro moved and Mr. Kochenburger seconded to move that the Council direct the town staff to investigate the possibility of building two new elementary schools sequentially over a multi-year period and report back to the Council no later than the end of the calendar year. This report shall also address the possibility of phasing in improvements to Mansfield Middle School.

Discussions ensued regarding the belief of some members that the two school project is still the preferred option; the uncertainty of the impact of the Storrs Center project; the impact of the proposed hiring of new faculty and the development of the technology park; and whether or not the repair option has been fully explored.

Council members expressed their thanks to Town Manager Matt Hart, Director of Finance Cherie Trahan, and the rest of the building team for all their work.

The Town Manager will consult with bond counsel as to whether the two school project, as described, should be presented to the voters in a single referendum or if, since they are to be built sequentially, will require two referenda. Mr. Hart will also establish a timeline for the project.

Ms. Wassmundt raised a point of order regarding the ability to discuss the offered motion as this is a special meeting and limited to the subjects listed on the agenda.

The Chair ruled the subject matter of the special meeting is the school building project and the motion is therefore in order.

The motion passed with Kochenburger, Moran, Paterson, Ryan, Schaefer and Shapiro in favor and Freudmann, Keane and Paulhus opposed.

Ms. Keane moved and Mr. Freudmann seconded that members of the Town Council, the Town Manager and the Finance Director arrange a meeting with our legislators to work on the possibility of making legislative changes to our reimbursement rates for school renovations.

Ms. Keane requested a member of the minority be included in the discussions. These discussions will be arranged after the November elections.

The motion passed unanimously.

IV. AJOURNMENT

Mr. Paulhus moved and Mr. Shapiro seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

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